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I found in Armagh the splendid,  
Meekness, wisdom, circumspection,  
Fasting in obedience to the Son of God;  
Noble, prosperous sages.<sup>4</sup>

I found in each great church,  
Whether internal, on shore or island,  
Learning, wisdom, devotion to God,  
Holy welcome and protection.

I found the lay monks,  
Of alms, the active advocates—  
And in proper order with them  
The Scriptures without corruption.<sup>5</sup>

I found in Munster without (*geis*) prohibition,  
Kings, queens, and royal barils  
In every species of poetry well skilled—  
Happiness, comfort, pleasure.

I found in Conacht, famed for justice,  
Affluence, milk in full abundance,  
Hospitality, lasting vigour, fame,  
In this territory of Croghan<sup>6</sup> of heroes,

I found in the country of Connall (Tirconnell)  
Brave, victorious heroes,  
Fierce men of fair complexion,  
The high stars of Ireland.

I found in the province of Ulster  
Long-blooming beauty—hereditary vigour—  
Young scions<sup>7</sup> of energy,  
Though fair, yet fit for war and brave.

I found in the territory of Boyle  
\* \* \* \* \* (*M.S. effaced.*)  
Brehons, Erenachs,<sup>8</sup> palaces,  
Good military weapons, active horsemen.

I found in the fair-surfaced Leinster,  
From Dublin<sup>9</sup> to Slewmargy,<sup>10</sup>  
Long living men, health, prosperity,  
Bravery, hardihood, and traffic.<sup>11</sup>

4 *Sruithe*, learned men, sages, &c. The *Sruithe* were men in religious orders. The Annals of the Four Masters make frequent use of this word.

5 *Aithche* is the word of the original, it signifies, adulteration, corruption. See Cormac's Glossary under the word *Aithche*, a prostitute. Another Irish scholar says that the word should be translated *contradiction*. O'Reilly has not this word in his Dictionary; the nearest word to it in letters given by him is *aithcheo*, which he explains, blame, reproach, a contradicting; but the writer of these observations can produce examples of the use of the word *aithcheo* from the writings of the celebrated Duaid M'Fribis, the last of the hereditary antiquaries of Lecan, from which it appears that *aithcheo* properly signifies, "to make little of, to bring to disrepute." He does not however think that the *aithche* used in this poem is the *aithcheo* given in O'Reilly's dictionary, but that it is the root from which the word *aithche*, a prostitute, is formed. Besides, to translate *aithche*, "contradiction," here, can scarcely be intelligible; for it is evident to any one at all acquainted with the history of this period that Alfred, or whoever was the author of this poem, alludes to the faithfulness of the copies of the Sacred Scriptures then to be seen in Ireland, some of which, we are happy to state, are yet extant, to excite the admiration of all modern penmen.

6 Croghan was the Royal palace of Connaught, hence the province was frequently called by the poets, "the Country of Croghan."

7 *Gas*, in the original, signifies a *Scion*, or *twig*. It has a familiar figure in Irish to compare youths to *Scions*, men to *trees*, and old heroes to *trees of ancient growth*.

8 *Erenachs*. Cormac Mc Cullenan above-mentioned derives this word from the Greek *Archos*, which he says, signifies *Excellus* in Latin, he defines it *anais cenn coman*, a noble-full ruler. Usher (on Corbes &c.) thinks it a corruption of the Latin *Archidivonus*, and although Colgan gives it a different derivation, he is often forced to translate it so.

9 *Ath-cliaith*, which Adamnan calls *Vadum-cliaid*, is the ancient name of Dublin; it signifies, "the Ford of *Ithardle*." The book of Dinmneachus or History of the ancient fortresses of Ireland, is the only Record that gives a satisfactory account of the origin of this name.

10 *Siabh Mairge*, a mountain in the Queen's Co. near the river Barrow. It derives its name from Hy-Mairge, at, *Hy m-Bairrche*, the name of an ancient Sept that inhabited the barony of Slewmargy, in the Queen's County.

11 *Cennaidhect*, in the original. Tacitus says that the harbours of Ireland were better known to merchants and traders than those of Britain.

I found from Ara to Gle,  
In the rich country of Ossory,  
Sweet fruit, strict jurisdiction,  
Men of truth, chess-playing.

I found in the great fortress<sup>12</sup> of Meath  
Valour, hospitality, and truth,  
Bravery, purity, and mirth—  
The protection of all Ireland.

I found the aged of strict morals;  
The historians recording truth—  
Each good, each benefit that I have sung,  
In Ireland I have seen.

J. O'D.

12 *Port* in the original signifies a *fortified Residence*, a *Castle*. Keating in the reign of Roderick O'Conor gives a full explanation of this word, I mean the original not the translation—for the English Edition in many passages is more a version of Geoffrey of Monmouth than of Geoffrey Keating.

13 Alluding to Tara, in which the monarch of Ireland lived.

## THE GAME OF COMAN.

PLAYED BY THE NORTH AMERICAN INDIANS.

Our readers will, we have no doubt, be highly amused in reading the subjoined picturesque account, abridged from Captain Basil Hall's Travels, of the Indian game of ball play, and which, they will be surprised to find, is in every respect similar to the favourite game of *coman* as played in Ireland. We may naturally enquire, how has this curious coincidence originated? That it should be accidental is very improbable; and are we then to conclude that the Irish and the Creek Indians are descended from the same stock? Do not laugh reader at the folly of this supposition; it is not quite so ridiculous as you may suppose. You all know that our Phœnician origin has been asserted, and, we might add, proved by our historians and antiquaries; for our own parts, to a certain extent, we have no doubt on this point. A similar origin has been also assigned to the North American Indians by the writer of the Universal History, and by a vast number of other learned men; and the probability of the conjecture has been wonderfully strengthened in our times, by the discovery of various remains of antiquity similar to those of the old world, and proving the occupation of the country at a more remote time by a civilized race. Let it be remembered too, that those Indians are altogether unlike other savages, that they have the finest intellectual capabilities, and are brought without difficulty into the habits of civilized life. It is remarkable also that a singular coincidence is found in many of their simple primitive words with those of the Irish, as for instance, *isca*, water, *inis*, an island, *bogo*, soft, &c., coincidences that could hardly be the result of chance. How sublime then is the probable supposition that two branches of the same family, after journeying in directly opposite courses, and making a circuit of the globe, are again united into one community after a lapse of three thousand years!

We should not take leave of this curious subject without noticing that the game of *coman*, like that of chess, is proved historically to be of the highest antiquity in Ireland. In the will of Cahir Mor, monarch of Ireland, in the second century, preserved in the book of Lecan in the library of the Royal Irish Academy, that monarch leaves to Crimthan fifty hurling balls of brass, and as many brazen *coman*.

Captain Basil Hall entered the country of the Creek Indians in the month of April, 1828. In his own peculiarly lively and amusing way, he describes various customs and ceremonies which he saw practised,—but we have at present to do with nothing but the *ball-play*. Fifty strong, stout Indians from one village were pitted against fifty equally strong and nimble from another village—while men, women, and children, were collected to witness the contest. After describing the preliminary ceremonies, the Captain says:

"At a signal from one of the chiefs, the two parties suddenly sprung to their feet, and stood brandishing their sticks over their heads. Every player held one of these

implements in each hand. They were formed of light, tough wood, I think willow, about two feet long, and as thick as my thumb. At the end farthest from the hand, the sticks were split and formed into an oval, three inches long by two wide, across which opening, or loop, were stretched two things made of hide. By means of these bats, the ball was struck to a great distance whenever any of the players succeeded in hitting it fairly. This, however, was not very often the case, for reasons which will be stated immediately. Generally speaking, the ball was grasped or held between the ends of the two sticks, and carried along over the head by the fortunate player who had got hold of it. The ball was pretty much like that used in Tennis courts, only not so hard, being formed out of raw hide stuffed with deer's hair.

After the parties had stood for some minutes in silence, in two rows facing one another, they stepped forward till they came within the distance of a few feet. Upon some word of command being given by one of the chiefs, every one laid down his sticks before him on the ground. A deputation of the chiefs highest in rank now proceeded to examine and count the parties, in order to make sure of there being an equal number on both sides. All these ceremonies, and various others which I forget, being ended, an old man stood forward and made a speech, or talk, as it is called, which, being interpreted to us, appeared to be formed of injunctions to the combatants to observe fair play, and to do honour to their country upon this important occasion. As soon as he ceased, the Indians scattered themselves over the ground, according to some rules not unlike those of cricket, by which the players might intercept the ball, and send it back again in the right direction. I observed that each of the goals, or wickets, formed by the two boughs at the ends, was guarded by a couple of the most expert players, whose duty it was to prevent the ball passing through the opening—the especial object of their antagonists.

These long-protracted ceremonials and preparations being over, one of the chiefs, having advanced to the centre of the area, cast the ball high in the air. As it fell, between twenty and thirty of the players rushed forward, and leaping several feet off the ground, tried to strike it. The multiplicity of blows, acting in different directions, had the effect of bringing the ball to the ground, where a fine scramble took place, and a glorious clatter of sticks mingled with the cries of the savages. At length an Indian, more expert than the others, contrived to nip the ball between the ends of his sticks, and, having managed to fork it out, ran off with it like a deer, with his arms raised over his head, pursued by the whole party engaged in the first struggle. The fortunate youth was, of course, intercepted in his progress twenty different times by his antagonists, who shot like hawks across his flight from all parts of the field, to knock the prize out of his grasp, or to trip him up—in short, by any means to prevent his throwing it through the opening between the boughs at the end of the play-ground. Whenever this grand purpose of the game was accomplished, the successful party announced their right to count one by a fierce yell of triumph, which seemed to pierce the very depths of the wilderness. It was sometimes highly amusing to see the way in which the Indian who had got hold of the ball contrived to elude his pursuers. It is not to be supposed he was allowed to proceed straight to the goal, or wicket, or even to get near it; but, on the contrary, he was obliged, in most cases, to make a circuit of many hundred yards amongst the trees, with thirty or forty swift-footed fellows stretching after or athwart him, with their fantastic tigers' tails streaming behind them; and he, in like manner, at full speed, holding his sticks as high over his head as possible, sometimes ducking to avoid a blow, or leaping to escape a trip, sometimes doubling like a hare, and sometimes tumbling at full length, or breaking his shins on a fallen tree, but seldom losing hold of his treasure without a severe struggle. It really seemed as if the possessor of the ball upon these occasions had a dozen pair of eyes, and was gifted at the time with double speed; for, in general, he had not only to evade the attacks of those who were close to him, but, to avoid being cut off, as it is called in nautical language, by the others farther

ahead. These parts of the game were exciting in the highest degree, and it almost made the spectators breathless to look at them.

Sometimes the ball, when thrown up in the first instance by the chief, was reached and struck by one of the party before it fell to the ground. On these occasions, it was driven far amongst the pine-trees, quite out of sight to our eyes, but not to those of the Indians, who darted towards the spot, and drove it back again. In general, however, they contrived to catch the ball before it fell, and either to drive it back, or to grasp it and run along, as I have described, towards the end of the ground. Sometimes they were too eager to make much noise; but, whenever a successful blow was made, the people on the winning side utter a short yell, so harsh and wild, that it made my blood run cold every time I heard it, from being associated with tortures, human sacrifices, scalplings, and all the horrors of Indian warfare.

The notation of the game was most primitive. Two of the oldest and most trustworthy of the chiefs were seated on one side, each with ten small sticks in his hand, one of which was thrust into the sand every time the ball happened to be driven through the wicket. Twenty was game; but I observed these learned sages never counted higher than ten, so that when it became necessary to mark eleven, the whole ten sticks were pulled out, and one of them replaced.

Sometimes the ball fell amongst the groups of lookers on, the women and children of the different Indian villages. It did not signify a straw, however, who was in the way; all respect of persons, age, and sex was disregarded, in the furious rush of the players, whose faculties seemed concentrated in the game alone.

The agent had previously taught me the art of avoiding the mischief of these whirlwind rushes of the Indians; and it was fortunate for me that he did so. I was standing on one side of the ground, admiring a grand chase, which was going on at some considerable distance, when one of the players, who was watching his opportunity, intercepting the fugitive, and struck the ball out of the other's grasp, though he was bounding along with it at a prodigious rate. The ball pitched within a yard or two of the spot where I was standing. In the next instant a dozen or twenty Indians whizzed past me, as if they had been projected from cannons. I sprang to the nearest tree, as I had been instructed, and putting my hands and legs round, embraced it with all my might. A poor boy, however, close to me, had not time to imitate my example, and being overwhelmed by the multitude, was rolled over and over half a dozen times, in spite of his screams, which was lost in the clatter of sticks, and the yells and shouts of the combatants, who, by this time, had become animated by the exercise, and were letting out the secret of their savage nature very fast. I felt rather awkward I must confess, as they rushed against me, and very nearly scraped me off; but I held fast, and escaped with a good daubing of rosin from the pine-tree. In half a minute afterwards the contest was raging some hundreds of yards off.

We did not stay to see the end of the game, as there was danger of our being benighted, an event which happened, however, notwithstanding all our precautions. I have since regretted much that I did not profit as far as I might have done by this only opportunity I ever had, or am ever likely to have, of seeing the habits of these people, who are fast vanishing from the face of the earth.

The continuation of the Essay on the fine Arts has been postponed in consequence of delay in getting the Illustrations out of the Engraver's hands. It will be proceeded with in our next.

We regret not being able to keep our promise in having Part I. ready. This has been caused partly in not having rightly calculated the time requisite in getting the numbers ready, and partly from unavoidable delay in reprinting. They will assuredly be ready next week.

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